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Malaysia came in second position in the World Bank's 2020 ranking for 190 economies in dealing with construction permits. While we were pleasantly surprised by this achievement, it only goes to show that collaborative efforts by all parties can indeed achieve the great results pay off well.

Thereafter the journey gets tougher as pressure also builds up for us to maintain this position. The scoring was based on a small project built on land which has a zoning approval.

Following that, the Technical Working Group on Dealing with Construction Permit decided to widen the scope to improve the entire process right from scratch, that is from planning, zoning , approval process for development, that is building plans, construction process and completion certificate. This is to better serve the entire Property Development and Construction Industry and not only focussed on World Bank ranking.

In 2019, the government's target was to lessen the number of processes starting with the construction sector to achieve a ideal investment climate in Malaysia, by setting a target of reducing building permit approval period to 90 days from 390 days. For this to take place, we need to improve all levels of the processes. PEMUDAH is constantly reviewing processes at the federal level and the key is for states and local authorities to buy in and adopt changes as soon as possible.

One of PEMUDAH's objectives, for instance, is to standardise procedures nationwide from the current large number of diverse procedures, as they would be beneficial for both domestic and foreign investors who want to see certainty, clarity and transparency.

A World Bank subnational study measuring business regulations placed Kuala Lumpur as the top in terms of dealing with construction permits to build a warehouse. KL needs only nine procedures compared to other cities namely Georgetown, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Kuantan and Kuching. We are working with the Federal Government to get the process and concepts adopted at the state and local government level .

The OSC (One Stop Centre) initiative by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government is still being improved to set the parameters for strict timeline response in the area of property development and construction. It will entail a long journey because things change, the environment also changes, tools change not to mention the entry of new designs , products and services especially in automation , computerisation and living standards.

For instance with MRT and LRT, the concept of transit- oriented development requires a whole set of guidelines and procedures to capitalise on the advantages, so it is a continuous improvement journey.

The Express Construction Permit (E10) which was successfully implemented in Kulim, Kedah reflects not only the exemplary leadership of the Datuk Bandar but also his dedication to

implement E10 and that makes a lot of difference. It demonstrate that with commitment and dedication the desired results can indeed be achieve.

Different models are being practised by other local authorities and with a slightly different set of procedures which is why we are seeking nationwide standardisation otherwise different sets of processes will only cause more uncertainties and confusion and result in unnecessary delays . and questions for those applying.

Sudden changes without consultation with all stakeholders , even presumably for the better can result in in a `shock' to the system and cause unnecessary anguish and delay.

Having consultation is important as good regulatory practice requires them to consult the stakeholders and get inputs based on their experience and inputs from stakeholders.

One example is the intensity of use of land which is calculated by plot ratio. Confusion arises when the local authority tweaks some conditions for submission without getting the views of the stakeholders who are on the receiving end like surrendering a portion of a non-stratified building when it is not allowed under the National Land Code.

The government in getting the economy restarted must resolve obstacles and facilitate the reopening. When permits have lapsed over the two-year COVID 19 period, why not provide a blanket automatic renewal extension for these permits which were initially approved after conditions had been met then.

The whole world is experiencing a perfect storm at the moment with inflationary pressures, supply disruption, high energy cost, higher interest rates, high cost of doing business, high cost of living and weaker propensity to spend. It is crucial that the government be agile with all the changes to regulate and provide time for industries like construction to comply with instructions like the centralised labour quarters. Likewise, the proposed minimum wage hike is significant and we should not stymie the economic recovery with an additional cost of doing business at this point.